(e) The Government of India has brought to zero level the excise duty on processed fruits and vegetables. The excise duty on aerated soft drinks has been reduced from 32% to 24%. Excise duty on biscuits, boiled sweets, sugar confectionery (excluding white chocolate) has been brought down from 16% to 8%. Further, the Ministry has also requested the State/Union Territories to rationalise and simplify the various taxes imposed by them so as to create an enabling environment for the growth of food processing sector.

Sale of wheat to flour mills

3612. SHRI R.P. GOENKA:
PROF. RAM DEO BHANDARY:
SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have sold 10 million tonnes of luster lost, damaged by rain and low shelf life 'Animal feed' wheat meant for export, to flour mills;

(b) if so, the reasons for low quality of wheat crop;

(c) the quantity of wheat used of this; and

(d) whether Government carried out any investigations in this matter including its quality and fitness for human consumption and the present status of the left out stocks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) to (d) No, Sir. The lustre lost wheat *i.e.* the wheat which had lost its natural lustre due to rains during the advanced stage of the maturity of the crop was procured for the Central Pool during the year 2001-02 in the States of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. After getting the analytical tests conducted by the Government, the nutritional value of the lustre lost wheat stocks was found to be at par with that of the sound grain wheat and the stocks well within the PFA Standards of wheat fit for human consumption. The procured stocks of lustre lost wheat have been liquidated through lifting under the targeted Public Distribution System and other Welfare Schemes, and sale for export

and domestic consumption though the Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) which included sales to the domestic flour Mills Industry. None of the flour Mills has made any complaint regarding the quality of the lustre lost wheat purchased from FCI.

Committee on foodgrains system

†3613. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Expenditure Reforms Commission and Abhijit Sen Committee had given some suggestions during the last year with regard to reforms in foodgrains system;

(b) if so, the details of the suggestions given by both of them;

(c) when these suggestions were received by Government; and

(d) the action taken by Government on the basis of these suggestions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Expenditure Reforms Commission (ERC) and the Abhijit Sen Committee, known as the High Level Committee on a Long Term Grain Policy (HLC) submitted their Reports to the Government on 10.7.2000 and 31.7.2002 respectively. The major recommendations of the ERC and Abhijit Sen Committee on reforms in the foodgrains management system are given in the Statement I and II (*See* below).

(d) The suggestions included in the reports have wide policy ramifications, and require consultation with concerned Ministries/ Departments/State Governments which are currently in progress.

Statement-I

Recommendations of the Expenditure Reforms Commission

1. The State Governments will have to put in major efforts for identifying the BPL population, giving them ration cards and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.